

Alan Stoga, President

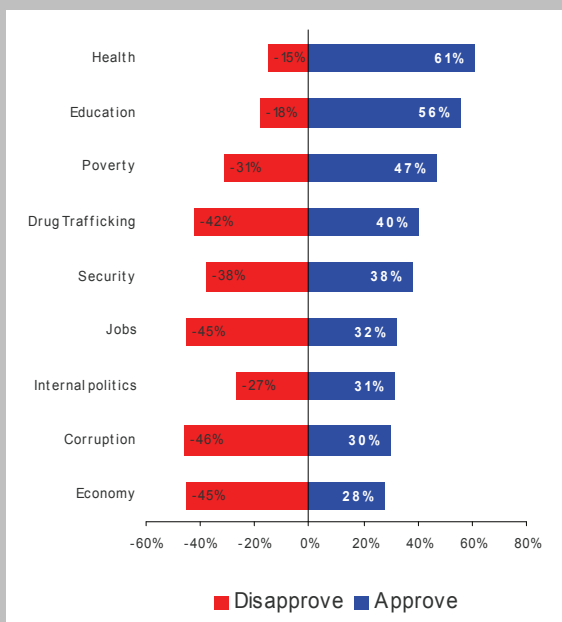
Daniel Wilson, Managing Director and editor

Polls

High marks for government social programs

The 3/1 *Reforma* poll, which we reported last week that gave President Calderón an overall approval rating of 66%, also surveyed opinions on individual policy areas. The government gets high marks on its health, education, and anti-poverty initiatives, while falling short on economic issues, security, and corruption.

What is your opinion about how President Calderón is managing the following issues?



Key Dates

1/31-3/11: Federal 'pre-campaign' period

3/14-29: Major parties select candidates for Congress

4/6: Start of state election campaigns *

4/30: End of regular Congressional session

4/29-5/2: Deadline for registering candidates for Chamber of Deputies

5/5: Start of federal election campaigns

7/5: National congressional, 6 gubernatorial, and 5 other local elections.

* May vary by state

New Secretary of Communications and Transportation

The President named **Juan Molinar Horcasitas** as the new Secretary of Communications and Transportation (SCT), replacing the embattled **Luis Téllez**. Molinar has been the director of the Social Security Institute (IMSS), and was one of Calderón's key supporters during the 2006 campaign. Speculation about Téllez's departure surged ever since the leak of his private phone calls three weeks earlier, and the threat of further disclosures. (He now becomes a personal adviser to the President on economic issues.) Many PANistas were glad to see Téllez, a PRIista, forced out. PAN party president **Germán Martínez** said in a press conference, "In the PAN we are pleased because a loyal PANista is the new Secretary. ... We recognize that there has to be absolute loyalty on the part of the President's collaborators. The change was necessary, and Juan Molinar guarantees loyalty." In contrast, **Manlio Fabio Beltrones**, the PRI leader in the Chamber of Deputies, said, "Its time to review the presidential system so that no longer will we have nominations without consultation, that are capricious, and that serve to make up a government of 'cronies' or of 'quotas.'" (Universal 3/4)

Other cabinet changes made

In other cabinet changes, **Daniel Karam**, who had been heading the successful *Seguro Popular* social insurance program and was a classmate of Calderón's at Harvard, becomes the new social security head. **Gerónimo Gutiérrez**, the deputy foreign minister for the U.S. and Canada, takes over as Undersecretary of Government, the #2 slot in the interior ministry. The scandal-plagued **Sergio Vela**, the head of the National Arts Council, Conaculta, was forced out in favor of the head of the government's publishing house, **Consuelo Saizar**. (Universal 3/4)

Troops flood Juárez

The mayor of Juarez, **José Reyes Ferriz** said that the military would take control of the public safety, transit, prison, and commerce areas of the city government. The head of public safety quit two weeks ago because of threats, and the incumbents in the other positions resigned to make way. Public security forces in Juárez will total 11,000: including 7,000 soldiers, 2,000 federal preventive police, and 2,000 municipal police. A prison riot between two gangs left 20 inmates dead, but news reports suggest that the overall level of violence in the city has declined since the arrival of new troops. (Universal 3/4)

PRI marks 80th anniversary

The PRI celebrated its 80th anniversary amid widespread speculation that the party that ruled Mexico for 71 years could regain the majority in Congress in the July elections. Notes columnist Ricardo Alemán, "The PRI is a national culture that – for good or for ill – colonized all the other parties with the most questionable aspects of its antidemocratic practices. ... Contrary to what many thought 10 years ago, the PRI today is the party that symbolizes political and economic stability, governability, reforms, security ... Nobody doubts that the PRI is corrupt, dishonest, undemocratic ... but everybody thinks of their governments as effective ... Collective amnesia matters." (Universal 3/5)